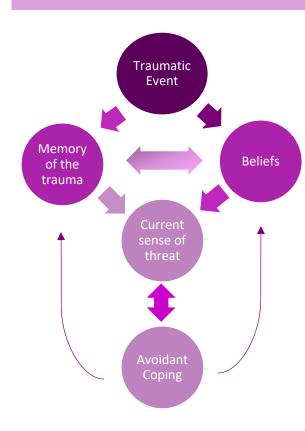
THE LINK BETWEEN PTSD AND SUBSTANCE USE





WHAT IS PTSD?

"PTSD is a condition that can develop after you have gone through a life-threatening event. If you have PTSD, you may have trouble keeping yourself from thinking over and over about what happened to you. You may try to avoid people and places that remind you of the trauma. You may feel numb. Lastly, if you have PTSD, you might find that you have trouble relaxing. You may startle easily and you may feel on guard most of the time."

> - National Center for PTSD www.ptsd.va.gov

PTSD AND SUBSTANCE USE

PTSD and substance abuse commonly occur together ranging from 30-59% of cases in women and 11-38% of cases in men. The relationship between PTSD and substance use is complicated, as people use substances for several reasons like to escape or cope with PTSD, to "get through the day," or because they have little desire to keep their bodies alive and healthy, to name a few. However, substance use can either increase or decrease PTSD symptoms and puts individuals at higher risk for exposure to traumatic events. - Nejavits (2002)

HEALING FROM PTSD AND SUBSTANCE USE

STAGES OF HEALING



Stage 1: Safety

Free yourself from substance use Build healthy relationships Cope with your feelings Protect yourself from destructive people and situations Do not hurt yourself or others Increase your functioning Attain stability



Stage 2: Mourning

Grieving your past - what trauma and substance use didto you.

Cry deeply over the loss (e.g., loss of innocence, loss of trust, loss of time)



Step 3: Reconnection

Reconnect with the world in joyful ways.

There are research-backed therapeutic interventions that have been shown to significantly improve symptoms of trauma and substance use. Some examples are Seeking Safety and Cognitive Processing Therapy.

SAFELY COPING WITH TRAUMA

Actively engaging in healthy coping strategies allows for survivors to take direct action, which can make us feel less hopeless.

There are several things to consider when beginning to cope with trauma. The first being that the feelings you have related to the traumatic event are normal. The second is understanding that recovery is a process that takes time and active coping. Finally, knowing the difference between safe coping and unsafe coping is necessary.

Safe Coping

- 1. Asking for help
- 2. Taking good care of your body
- 3. Setting a boundary in a relationship
- 4. Rethinking the situation

Unsafe Coping

- 1. Using Substances
- 2. Hurting yourself (e.g., cutting or burning)
- 3. Letting someone harm you
- 4. Acting Impulsively

 Remind yourself these reactions are not dangerous and you would not feel worried if they were occurring during exercise Slow down your breathing These sensations will pass Remind yourself it is a reaction to a dream Get out of bed, orient to here and now Engage in a calming activity like listening to relaxing music Tell someone if possible Talk to your doctor about nightmares, they may prescribe helpful medications. FOR IRRITABILITY, ANGER, AND RAGE Take a time out Exercise daily Remember anger doesn't work; it increases your stress and
 Get out of bed, orient to here and now Engage in a calming activity like listening to relaxing music Tell someone if possible Talk to your doctor about nightmares, they may prescribe helpful medications. FOR IRRITABILITY, ANGER, AND RAGE Take a time out Exercise daily
Take a time outExercise daily
 can cause health problems Talk to your counselor or doctor If you blow up at family or friends, talk to them about it; let them know how you feel and how you are coping.
FOR TROUBLE FEELING OR EXPRESSING POSITIVE EMOTIONS
 Remember this is a common reaction to trauma. Do not feel guilt for something you cannot control. Engage in activities you enjoy or used to enjoy, even if you don't feel like it Let your loved ones know you care; call them or send a note, small gift, or card.

This is an exercise that tackles various symptoms of trauma. It allows us to take our mind off of a memory, bring ourselves out of a flashback, or reduce anxiety in general. To do this, simply notice some things you see, some things you feel (where your body is in physical space), some things you hear, some smells, and something you taste.

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